

Remarks at the United States Coast Guard Change-of-Command Ceremony
June 1, 2022

The President. Thank you, Mr. Secretary, for giving my speech. *[Laughter]* And I'm going to sit down. *[Laughter]* You probably wish I would; it's kind of getting a little warm in here. *[Laughter]*

Today we witness a tradition long standing in the United States Coast Guard: change of command, as a new admiral assumes the leadership of our Nation's oldest, continuous seagoing service. And it's both a connection to our earliest days as a nation and a new milestone in our history. We use those phrases lightly, but this is a big deal.

Admiral Linda Fagan, Coast Guard Academy Class of 1985. Class of '85, stand up if you're out there. *[Applause]* Whoa. Whoa. As they say in Southern Delaware, "Y'all knew it then, didn't you?" *[Laughter]*

Well, you've crewed the *Polar Star*, a heavy icebreaker. You've captained the Port of New York. You've served on all seven continents. And you've commanded the Coast Guard operations in the Pacific. You've served as Vice Commandant of the Coast Guard.

Throughout her decades of service, she's demonstrated an exceptional skill, integrity, and commitment to our country. She upholds the highest traditions of the United States Coast Guard.

This moment of acceleration of global challenges and hybrid threats that don't stop at any border, there's no one more qualified to lead the proud women and men of the Coast Guard, and she will also be the first woman to serve as Commandant of the Coast Guard, the first woman to lead any branch of the United States Armed Forces. And it's about time.

The Secretary of Defense, when he sent me the name, I said, "What in the hell took you so long?" *[Laughter]* Anyway. Really, congratulations.

Look, with her trailblazing career, Admiral Fagan shows that young people—young people entering a service—that we mean it when we say there are no doors—no doors closed to women.

And I might add that includes her daughter, Coast Guard Lieutenant Aileen Fagan. Now the—I've thoroughly embarrassed you, haven't I? Because you look like my son used to look. They'd say, "Vice President Biden and his son, Major Biden." And he'd go, "Oh, Dad." *[Laughter]* Thank you. Thank you. It's not meant to embarrass, it's meant to compliment.

Every little kid growing up today who dreams of serving their country will know that this is what an admiral and a Service Chief of the United States Armed Forces looks like. I mean it sincerely. It matters.

I concluded, when I ran, by the way, that I'd make sure that my Government, my administration, and the service looked like America. I want to thank you, Admiral Fagan, for taking the helm during this critical moment and for all that you've done throughout your career to open the doors of opportunity just a little bit wider to allowing those following behind you a way through.

I want to acknowledge your family. They're here to support you and supported you every day, just as they have throughout your career.

John—where—John, where are you? I'm going to embarrass you. John, stand up, will you? Come on. John, we don't know one another, but we have something in common: We both married way above our station. *[Laughter]*

And Moira and Aileen, and your parents, Jon and Loann. Where—where's Mom and Dad? I watched Dad watching that young woman in the honor guard coming around with that rifle. You did—you had to—you moved quickly, Dad. *[Laughter]* All kidding aside, thank you for the values you instilled. It matters. It matters a great deal to both of you. And I—you know, from the time that she was a swab, it just is amazing. I want to thank you for sharing Admiral Fagan with us

And, Admiral Schultz, thank you for leading our Coast Guard as Commandant over the last 4 years, a stellar capstone to your nearly four decades of outstanding service to the Nation.

I got the advantage of doing, for, I think, the third time in my career, the Academy commencement, and your second-to-last one. And he also has a young man—a good-looking boy, man—*[laughter]*—who is a—who was also commissioned at the time. So I don't think we've seen the last of this.

To Dawn and to all the children—Lindsey, Kelsey, Anna—is it Annaliese? I hope I'm pronouncing it correctly——

Outgoing Commandant of the U.S. Coast Guard Admiral Karl L. Schultz, USCG. You got it.

The President. ——and—is that right? And Zach—Zachary and Ensign Schultz. Where's Ensign Schultz? Is he here?

Adm. Schultz. He's underway, sir.

The President. He's underway. *[Laughter]* For those of you who are not in the military, "underway" doesn't mean they're late on the way here. *[Laughter]* I just want you to—*[laughter]*. If you say "underway" in my family, they think, "Where the hell are they?" *[Laughter]*

But look, it's not just those who wear the uniform who serve—and I've said this many times—it's the whole family. As an English poet said, "They also serve who only stand and wait." They also serve who only stand and wait. Many times, your son, your—was on—your daughter was on patrol somewhere, and you're wondering—your wife or your mom. You stand there and you wait.

Or the year my son was in Iraq. And the year before that, when he was—8 months, he was—6 months, he was in the Balkans. It's what my mother—my wife would stand there at the coffee—at the sink, drinking that coffee, just saying a prayer every day. It's what all of you—we owe you. We owe you big. Thank you for all that you've done for the country over the years. We've asked a lot of you, and you've risen to every challenge.

I also want to thank the women and men of the Coast Guard who are standing the watch today and every day, here at home and around the globe, including my Military Aide who is here today, Lieutenant Commander Jayna McCarron. Where is she? I'm going to embarrass the devil out of her, but she—*[applause]*. I asked—she's hiding somewhere. I met her at the Academy and asked her to come with us.

Our Nation is grateful to all of you for your years of service and your continued service. And as we look to the years and the decades ahead, the Coast Guard is only going to play an increasingly prominent role in our homeland and our national security.

The challenges we face continue to evolve, and the choices we make today are literally going to shape the direction of the world throughout the 21st century. What we do the next 10 years are going to lay it down. We'll be calling on the Coast Guard more and more frequently, as

you know, to underwrite the international maritime security; to keep the sea lanes open and secure; to uphold a rules-based international order; to protect the waters, as was mentioned, through which nearly one-quarter of the United States GDP is transported; to manage the impact of climate change becoming more extreme—more extreme weather and growing migration flows.

In addition, you see what's happening in the Arctic. The Arctic is going to change drastically and become much—a place that is going to also potentially generate potential conflict, in terms of dominating the Arctic as it melts.

The Coast Guard is central element to the administration's new Indo-Pacific strategy, building partnerships with nations throughout the region to take on illegally and unreported and unregulated fishing, reported—the shared threats that conduct and coordinate human, environmental missions.

I met yesterday with the Prime Minister of New Zealand. Part of what we're initiating now is, there's another country that is literally eating up all of the fishing grounds, literally overfishing everything. We've decided we have to be engaged, and we have to be engaged with our Coast Guard and our military, our Navy.

And with the climate change accelerating, we're seeing more frequent and more intense storms that carry devastating impacts across our Nation and throughout the hemisphere.

Admiral Schultz, you oversaw the Coast Guard's response to the most active hurricane season on record, in 2020: 30 named storms, 12 of which impacted the Gulf and Atlantic coasts. And the Coast Guard was there for every single one of them. And with today marking the official first day of the 2020 [2022]* hurricane season, we're anticipating the seventh straight year of above-average hurricane activity in the Atlantic.

We turned to the Coast Guard to help facilitate our national response to COVID-19, from helping with vaccinations to protecting ports and maritime supply chains. And we rely—we rely—on the Coast Guard to interdict illicit drug shipments at sea before they can enter the United States and respond to the greatly increased migration flows from the Americas.

Folks and Admiral Fagan, we know—we know—there is more work to be done to ensure the Coast Guard and all the branches of our Armed Forces reflect the full strength and diversity, including at the highest levels of our leadership.

When Admiral Fagan commissioned in 1985, only 5 years after the first women graduated from the Academy, she was one of just 16 commissioned female ensigns, only 8 percent of her graduating class. She was the only woman aboard *Polar Star* for the first set of orders. Currently, Corps of Cadets at the Academy, more than 1,000 cadets strong: 40 percent are women. Forty percent are women.

Admiral Fagan is part of a generation of pioneering women in the force—and this ceremony is historic—and a historic first in that effort, a promotion earned through a career of outstanding leadership and accomplishment. Now we need to keep working to make sure Admiral Fagan may be the first, but not the only person. We need to see more women at the highest levels of command in the Coast Guard and across every service in the Armed Forces.

We need to ensure women have an opportunity to succeed and thrive throughout their professional careers, and that means providing support and resources so women can compete fairly and fully for promotions and make sure women are not penalized in their career for having children. It also means creating an environment where every member of the Armed Forces feels

* White House correction.

safe in the ranks, including from sexual assault and harassment, and where their contributions are respected.

So thank you again, Admiral Schultz, for your dedicated service to our Nation and your steady leadership through the years at the Coast Guard. He's been called to—into new missions and asked to serve in extremely difficult circumstances.

And thank you, Admiral Fagan, for accepting this next mission and this great responsibility to lead the women and men of the Coast Guard, the finest Coast Guard in the world.

The Coast Guard is *Semper Paratus*—"always ready." Always ready. I know that you're ready for all that's ahead of you, and I look forward to watching you execute your job.

Again, thank you. May God bless you all, and may God protect our troops.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:23 a.m. at the Douglas A. Munro Coast Guard Headquarters Building. In his remarks, he referred to Secretary of Homeland Security Alejandro N. Mayorkas, who introduced the President; Moira E. Fagan, daughter, and Jon and Loann Keene, parents, of Commandant of the U.S. Coast Guard Adm. Linda L. Fagan; Ens. Eric K. Schultz, USCG, and Zachary Schultz, sons, Dawn M. Schultz, wife, and Kelsey E., Lindsey M., and Annaliese N. Schultz, daughters, of outgoing Commandant Schultz; and Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern of New Zealand.

Categories: Addresses and Remarks : U.S. Coast Guard Commandant, change-of-command ceremony.

Locations: Washington, DC.

Names: Ardern, Jacinda; Austin, Lloyd J., III; Biden, Jill T.; Fagan, Aileen I.; Fagan, John J.; Fagan, Linda L.; Fagan, Moira E.; Keene, Jon; Keene, Loann; Mayorkas, Alejandro N.; McCarron, Jayna; Schultz, Annaliese N.; Schultz, Dawn M.; Schultz, Eric K.; Schultz, Karl L.; Schultz, Kelsey E.; Schultz, Lindsey M.; Schultz, Zachary.

Subjects: Armed Forces, U.S. : Servicemembers :: Service and dedication; Armed Forces, U.S. : Servicemembers :: Sexual assault; Armed Forces, U.S. : Servicemembers :: Women servicemembers; Asia : Indo-Pacific Economic Framework; Defense, Department of : Secretary; Diseases : Coronavirus, domestic prevention efforts; Drug abuse and trafficking : Illegal drugs, interdiction efforts; Environment : Climate change; Environment : Conservation :: Fishery stocks, management efforts; Homeland Security, Department of : Coast Guard, U.S.; Homeland Security, Department of : Secretary; Immigration and naturalization : Refugees; New Zealand : Prime Minister.

DCPD Number: DCPD202200474.